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24 March 1980

Worldwide Report

NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT AND PROLIFERATION

(FOUO 3/80)



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WORLDWIDE REPORT
NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT AND PROLIFERATION
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CONTENTS	PAGE
LATIN AMERICA	
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS	
Implementation of Nuclear Energy Accord Between Cuba-Mexico (PRELA, 24 Jan 80)	1
WEST EUROPE	
FRANCE	
Nuclear Energy Policy, Programs; Planned, Existing Installations (Kai Krueger; STERN, 15 Nov 79)	3
Antinuclear Protests Rampant at Proposed Plogoff Site (Sylvie O'Dy; L'EXPRESS, 2-8 Feb 80)	12
ITALY	
Radiation Hazards Posed by U.S. Nuclear Base in La Maddalena (Gino Zasso; CORRIERE DELLA SERA, 31 Jan 80)	14
Interview With Ippolito on Nuclear Energy Problem (Felice Ippolito Interview; L'EUROPEO, 31 Jan 80)	16

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COUNTRY SECTION

FRANCE

NUCLEAR ENERGY POLICY, PROGRAMS; PLANNED, EXISTING INSTALLATIONS

Hamburg STERN in German 15 Nov 79 pp 30-38

[Report by Kai Krueger]

[Text] For Dr August Wilhelm Eitz, head of the Rhine-Westphalian Electricity Works, Inc. (RWE) in Essen, France is "a dream landscape." And this has nothing to do with the castles on the Loire and the pastel-colored hills in Provence. Rather, it is because of the reactor spheres and the gigantic cooling towers which are rising up along the Loire and Rhone Rivers and will soon be doing so all over France.

At present, the French are putting the gigantic sum of over DM100 billion into atomic industry. The nuclear managers on the other side of the Rhine do not appear to be concerned by the fact that here in the FRG, as everywhere in the West, the atomic industry is stagnating, and that recently even in the East it is running into criticism, and that after the menacing nuclear catastrophe in Harrisburg further construction of nuclear plants has been stopped for the present in the United States. The fact that the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission has now summoned the nuclear engineers to a conference dealing with the reliability of emergency cooling systems is obviously of interest in France only to opponents of nuclear energy.

France has likewise invested DM100 billion in uranium mines, nuclear fuel factories, atomic power plants and long-distance transmission lines. In 12 years approximately 70 nuclear power plants are supposed to insure that almost only atomic current flows out of our neighbors' electric outlets. A dozen reactors are already in operation there. Some 40 others are in series production. Construction of the other 30 is in preparation, including 6 of the particularly controversial fast breeder type. And right off with an output of 1,800 MW--unprecedented for atomic power plants.

Over DM200 billion for France's atomic industry. By way of comparison: in the FRG so far a total of about DM50 billion have been invested and budgeted by state and industry. The planned fast breeder in Kalkar on the lower Rhine (327 MW) is being vigorously contested in this country. And not only for reasons of safety. SPD and FDP politicians, who basically

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are not opponents of nuclear power, are shying away from the breeder which will force entry into the full "plutonium industry." Because without reprocessing and the further use of the plutonium "produced by breeding" this type of reactor would make no sense economically.

Obviously this fear does not exist in France. There the atomic train has departed. It is an express that stops nowhere and continuously gives itself momentum. For over DM200 billion in barely 20 years create facts which cannot be undone again. The reason is primarily because France's atomic industry makes almost everything itself and now entire branches of industry depend extensively on nuclear energy: our neighbor has become the first atomic state on earth.

France, in contrast to the FRG, has large uranium deposits in its own country--about 95,000 tons. And in contrast to all other industrial states France is aiming at an energy industry with a self-contained nuclear fuel cycle: the uranium extracted in the mine is enriched domestically, "burned" in the reactor and recovered from the atomic waste in reprocessing plants (together with the plutonium which was produced) and is then fed back into the reactor. Today the cycle is complete in France.

The atomic program was initiated in 1945 by Charles de Gaulle when he was still head of the provisional postwar government in France. He called into being the "Commissariat a l'Energie Atomique" (CEA) [Commission for Atomic Energy] 8 weeks after President Harry Truman of the United States had proclaimed: "The atomic age will be an American age."

The idea of American superiority was just as unbearable for de Gaulle as the idea of new superiority by Germany. In 1960 the CEA gave the people in Gaul their first atomic bomb. Since then it has been delivering atomic weapons for France's force de frappe.

In 1963 the French built the first commercial reactor at Chinon on the Loire. For 10 years it provided electricity. The CEA has developed various types of reactors culminating in the fast breeder whose prototype "Phenix" has been in operation for 6 years at Marcoule on the Rhone. Of course, in the first 3 years of operation it had to be shut down for a total of 1 year because of repeated leaks and fires in the sodium cooling system which is subject to explosions.

The larger "Super-Phenix" is under construction at Creys-Malville in the vicinity of the Swiss border. It was here at the end of July 1977 that about 4,000 heavily armed police brutally crushed the demonstration by 30,000 opponents of nuclear power, including also many Germans. A demonstrator died here, police and demonstrators lost hands or feet here from exploding tear gas grenades. Since then there have been hardly any big antinuclear power demonstrations in France. The projected costs of the 1,200 MW "Super-Phenix" have doubled to DM4 billion just in this year alone. But the gigantic "Hyper-Phenix" with 1,800 MW is already being planned.

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Since then the CEA has become a conglomerate with 30,000 staff employees and 50 subsidiaries and is a state within a state which always needs new fodder.

Its life blood, uranium, is a metal that does not occur in the pure state in nature. It is extracted from rock, where for the most part it is present only in two or three parts per million.

Uranium ore is mined by the open-cast method and underground. The latter is a dangerous job not only because of the--relatively weak--radiation from the rock. Uranium ores give off the radioactive gas radon, which accumulates in the shaft installations in the underground mines and can cause lung cancer. It is viewed as a scientific fact that uranium miners have a four to six times greater risk of getting cancer.

In order to be used as a nuclear fuel uranium must be converted in chemical plants into powdery, liquid or gaseous compounds. The most important step on the road to a fuel element is enrichment. For uranium contains only 0.7 percent of the fissionable isotope U 235. The rest is nonfissionable U 238. For fuel elements the U 235 content must be enriched from 0.7 to about 3 percent so that the chain reaction in nuclear fission can take place in the reactors which are on the market today.

To this end, the uranium in a gaseous compound is forced through porous filtering tubes. France has built a gigantic industrial complex for this costly enrichment at Pierrelatte on the lower Rhone; the complex extends for kilometers along a side canal.

At present a new factory is coming into being there at a cost of about DM10 billion; Italy, Belgium, Spain--and up to now also Iran--are involved in it. The new construction complex will contain 1,400 batteries that are as high as houses with a total of 130 million filtering tubes. The power of three nuclear power plants is required to operate the compressors with whose help the gaseous uranium compound is forced through the tubes at 120 km per hour. Together with a fourth plant, which serves as a reserve, they are already in existence at the works site.

It is a vicious circle: The perfect atomic industry continuously requires more energy, atomic energy, in order to keep the "system of the future" in operation. This kind of growth also includes the fact that in France, when the current atomic program is realized, 12 of the total of 70 reactors planned will be operating only to meet the needs of the nuclear energy industry itself. And, of course, for the nuclear fuel industry and to cover transmission losses from transporting current over long distances. And in France these are especially long because, mostly for political reasons, several nuclear power plants (as a rule four) are built at one site. That simplifies the matter of safety zones and surveillance and avoids conflicts with local opponents of nuclear power when searching for new construction sites.

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After the enrichment plant at Pierrelatte has reached full capacity in 5 years, France will control over one-third of the world's enrichment capacity. To date the United States has dominated this market 90 percent. Since Pierrelatte is booked solid until 1990, by the FRG among others, another enrichment plant of similar size is already being planned.

A blemish in the rapidly expanding industrial complex: with its four reactors it is located on the lower Rhone precisely at the place where there had been strong earthquakes in 1773, 1873 and 1934. French vulcanologist Haroun Tazieff thinks that new strong earthquakes are possible at any time.

Since France's nuclear power plants are designed only for quakes of average strength, the French energy commission CEA must play down the risk. The CEA maintains that so far the quakes have not been strong ones and it disputes any possibility that there could be stronger quakes along the Rhone. The fact that downstream near Aix-en-Provence 5,000 people fell victim to an earthquake in 1227 is ignored.

The French are in the lead even in the area of the controversial and dangerous reprocessing of burned out fuel elements. In a reprocessing plant the fuel elements and the remaining uranium are dissolved in caustic boiling nitric acid. The process of chemical decomposition produces fission products which are no longer usable and which, as highly active waste, are fused in glass. New fuel elements are made from the unused uranium and the plutonium which was produced in the reactor.

While the United States for the present has renounced reprocessing for civilian purposes and the planned construction of a German plant at Gorleben was called off, the French offer reprocessing capacities which they do not even have yet.

Five years ago in their reprocessing center in La Hague on the Atlantic they put into operation a station for light water fuel elements. Since then 1,500 tons are supposed to have been processed, yet because of breakdowns and contamination it has been only 106 tons so far. By next year the annual capacity is to be raised to 800 tons.

Waste disposal agreements between COGEMA, which operates La Hauge, a CEA subsidiary, and German atomic current producers have been kept secret up till now. Furthermore, COGEMA refuses to allow members of the Bundestag's committee for the interior in Bonn a look into the agreements which continue to bring in DM2.5 billion for the French and which until now were acknowledged by Bonn as proof of waste disposal whenever the issue of licensing a new reactor came up.

According to STERN's information, the decisive clause reads as follows: "In the event reprocessing...of radioactive residues is not possible, the agreement...will be changed so as to require COGEMA to provide storage."

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And up to the end of 1995, at that. Then the German client must take his fuel rods back unprocessed. That is the sum total of the proof of waste disposal on which Bonn has thus far been relying.

Yet the French have obligated themselves in this unbinding manner to process uranium in almost all of western Europe and even Japan. In the process, the French will urgently need reprocessing for themselves in the future--for their ambitious fast breeder program and entry into the plutonium industry.

No less grand are the dealings by the French with their atomic waste. Whatever radiates just a bit and accumulates in the region of the Atlantic coast, they simply dump into the sea. Together with the English they sink entire shiploads of atomic waste drums 1,000 kilometers off the coast.

An open gravel pit in the nearby hills is used to store the slightly active residues from the Pierrelatte industrial center. It is secured only with a screen wire fence and a padlock and ostensibly stores only very harmless wastes.

Environmentalists have put geiger counters against the drums and taken pictures of how the counters respond. Commentary by the industry is that "the environmentalists previously contaminated the drums themselves." A suit against person or persons unknown was rejected by the court because of a technical defect.

The French are using a small concrete hall with 10-m deep holes in the ground to store the highly active waste; there are research programs in progress worldwide which deal with waste disposal in salt domes deep down in the earth, in granite or in permanent ice. A concrete floor with steel covers over the holes shields the waste which will radiate for thousands of years and a blower constantly pumps air into the heated up storage rooms. When the hall is full, they will build on to it.

All the V.I.P.'s in business are involved in the French atomic industry. The leading conglomerates in machine construction (Empain-Schneider), aluminum (Pechiney-Ugine-Kuhlmann), chemistry (Rhone-Poulenc), electrical equipment (Societe Generale d'Electricite) together with banks, insurance companies and the state company CEA and the state power supply company "Electricite de France" (Ed F; 100,000 staff employees) make up a powerful atomic cartell.

Thus, the atomic felt of the companies also functions so well because a large share of economic leaders and high state officials come from the same school, the ENA--Ecole Nationale d'Administration [National School of Administration]. The so-called "Enarques" [graduates of the ENA] are the secret rulers in France. They go back and forth between state service and private industry, which accounts for the above-average harmony and intertwinement between France's industry and administration, between capital and state.

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No one exemplifies this better than ENA model pupil and national president Valery Giscard d'Estaing. His cousin, Francois Giscard, directs France's foreign trade bank as well as a "financing company for industry and export," which are both vigorously involved in financing nuclear power plants. Cousin Jacques is on the board of directors of Framatome (reactor construction) Technicatome (reactor planning) and Eurodif (uranium enrichment) and sits in the boss's chair at Somair (France's largest uranium mine abroad) and, as finance director, is on the board of the CEA. And Uncle Valery determines the policy guidelines.

This policy also includes guaranteeing the uranium supply. With its 95,000 tons of uranium reserves at home, France ranks seventh worldwide. But given the present planning that would last for only about 10 years. Thus, France is already importing about half of its uranium requirements and before long intends to increase the share of imports to two-thirds.

Most of it is to come in the future from Africa's "regions which promise to be rich in uranium" where geologists figure on up to 4.4 million tons of uranium reserves--more than in the United States, currently the richest country in the world in terms of uranium.

This also accounts for France's strong interest in Africa, to which, as a former colonial power, it was tied through tradition anyway.

Thus, the French supported Bocassa, the central-African killer emperor, actually not because they especially liked him. And they overthrew him also not only because of his atrocities. Paris wanted order and peace in Central Africa--16,000 tons of uranium reserves are located there. Thus, in the past 2 years French paratroopers twice crushed uprisings against dictator Mobutu in Zaire's Shaba copper province. The copper belt of the former Belgian colony has not only copper, but also uranium. And a dictator who is well-intentioned toward France is more acceptable than a leftist revolutionary government. Because of this Mobutu then also gained from President Giscard's state visit, gifts of millions for magnificent buildings and weapons deliveries.

In Chad, where 2,500 French soldiers are stationed, uranium deposits were recently discovered in the northern part of the country. More than 13,000 soldiers and many "military advisors" are distributed among the African garrisons of Djibuti, Reunion, Mayotte, Gabon, the Ivory Coast and Senegal and other countries on the black continent.

And because Paris readily agrees to the desires for weapons by its African friends, hardly any black politician is offended by the fact that France is also South Africa's most important supplier of weapons. The hated apartheid regime is equipped with French rockets, speedboats, helicopters, tanks and jet fighters. France has delivered two nuclear power plants to South Africa and in return may count on extensive uranium deliveries.

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France's largest supplier of uranium is Nigeria. In 1974 the leftist opposition there forced President Diori Hamani to negotiate new uranium exploitation agreements. According to these Paris would have had to pay mining rent that was four times greater. But a few hours before signing the agreements there was a putsch--and in desperately poor Nigeria the old conditions of delivery remained in effect and a new friendship developed. Kountie, Hamani's successor, is a graduate of the general staff school in Paris.

The atomic state also has a thorough grasp on things at home. Ever since the big rally by opponents of nuclear power at the construction site of the Super-Phenix breeder at Malville was smashed 2 years ago in a bloody manner by the police, there has been relative quiet at the front. In the country today there is no longer any opposition to the atomic industry worth mention. Many communities enjoy the warm shower of taxes which, at a site with four nuclear power plants, annually brings in between DMI and 1 1/2 million for the villages roundabout and the government district. On the average this is twice to three times the communities' revenues.

And so there are only isolated actions. Every now and then a transmission tower was blown up. And at the Nogent-sur-Seine construction site opponents of the atom locked both guards into their construction shed, destroyed cranes, compressors and a truck and burned up all the written documents that they could find.

At Bordeaux the antinukes swiped the publicly displayed book containing the documents on the planning of a power plant there. In Brittany again they stole the key to city hall from the mayor in order to obstruct the public display of planning for a nuclear power plant. Whereupon the prefect had the plan displayed in a rented house trailer across the street from city hall, which resulted in a tractor blockade of the access roads.

Anyway the atomic state need have no fear of opposition from the press. For it is dominated by the conservative Hersant concern which is supportive of the industry. Even in the opinion of a parliamentary commission France's radio and television journalists are more on the order of reporters at Court.

Even the courts cause no difficulties. Objections are possible only because of technical defects, but not against the substance of a licensing procedure. For reactors are always built in the public interest. Of course, that has to be established every time by a hearing. But for that purpose it is sufficient if only a handful of citizens is in favor of the reactor.

But now the first causes for concern were the cracks which were recently discovered in important steel parts of the French standard reactors, and in fact in three different reactors at the same time. They are cold cracks which had developed during welding. The cracks are, of course, only 2 cm long and scarcely 1 cm deep. That is not much for the 25-50 cm thick flanged sockets and tube plates of cast steel where they were found. Because the

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cracks are located under a protective layer of stainless steel they can only be located and welded if the reactor parts are disassembled. However, since these components are exposed to acidic water and strong stresses the danger does exist that they will get deeper.

Although experts and union members gave warning of this, the electric company and officials decided to put the new reactor blocks at the Gravelines and Tricastin sites into operation without examining them in advance for crack formations.

- KEY: 1. Nuclear power plant in operation
B = fast breeder
2. Nuclear power plant under construction or planned
3. Uranium and fuel element industry
4. Supplying industry
5. Uranium mines
6. Atomic waste

Photo Caption

From Mine to Waste: France the Atomic State

With its uranium mines, enrichment plants, nuclear power plants and two reprocessing plants, France, as an atomic state, has established a complete fuel cycle. At present 12 nuclear power plants are in operation, primarily on large rivers. The enrichment plants are grouped around the atomic center Pierrelatte in the south. The Cap de la Hague reprocessing plant is in the northwest on the Atlantic; it functions as a huge garbage can for radioactive effluents and wastes.

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COUNTRY SECTION

FRANCE

ANTINUCLEAR PROTESTS RAMPANT AT PROPOSED PLOGOFF SITE

Paris L'EXPRESS in French 2-8 Feb 80 p 75

[Article by Sylvie O'Dy]

[Text] "If you accept nuclear power, get your coffin ready." These words stand out starkly, black on white, in front of the mayor's office. For a week, the fever has risen in Plogoff. Plogoff, which is at the tip of Raz, the last village of Finisters before France plunges into the sea. Plogoff, which since 1974, has said "no" to the plan to install a nuclear powerplant.

Wednesday, the inhabitants gathered at the mayor's office to burn the public utility study dossier which was sent by the public authorities. Thursday, state of siege: in Plogoff, battered by the winds, a squad of mobile gendarmes guards two small vans in which the prefect, wrongheadedly and in spite of everyone, is having the infamous dossiers transported, thus transforming these vans into "annexes of the mayor's office." The people closed off the roads. At 0400 hours, behind armored vehicles, the forces of order attempted to clear the way in the light of powerful spotlights.

Tear gas against a rain of stones: the confrontations injure some of the demonstrators. During the day, several thousands of persons took part in a protest demonstration in Plogoff. The towns on Cape Sizun went into mourning. Schools and businesses closed their doors.

Makeshift Barricades

Opposition to nuclear power over the years has taken root in these Bretons of Raz point. Opposition which is all the more controversial because their elected officials--deputy, councilors general, municipal councilors--have come out in favor of the project. Jean-Marie Kerloch, the mayor, a retired seaman, said: "At the EDF [French Electric Company] they thought they had worn us down. But they forgot that these people here are stubborn." So stubborn that in 1976, when the national company wanted to conduct studies on the site of the future powerplant, the inhabitants threw up barriers on the three roads leading into the area. For 3 days and 3 nights, they kept watch at their makeshift barricades. The EDF agents departed. At the end, it was felt that they would not return. The dream is ended.

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This time the "enemy" has arrived in force for the public utility study, the first stage in the powerplant installation procedure. The mayors of the four towns concerned: Plogoff, Cleden-Cap-Sizun, Primelin and Goulien, want no part of it and have closed their offices. This made it necessary for the prefect's representative on the night of 22 to 23 January, flanked by mobile gendarmes, to come to the town at 0400 hours to post notices on the closed shutters of the Plogoff mayor's office. With the women at the head of the formation, everyone waited. There was Annie, president of the Fight Committee, Therese, Fifinne, Marguerite and others. Suddenly, the clash.

"You would have thought it was a war," said Therese, her head capped by a blue bonnet. "Imagine being caught in this rattrap with helmeted and armed men all around..."

"There Is Too Much To Do"

The men of Plogoff go to sea. In the Navy [Royale], like Ferdinand, age 68, "an anarchist and revolutionary today thanks to the EDF," in the merchant marine or as ocean fishermen. It is the women, aided by the retired men, who are steering the antinuclear ship.

Since 23 January, Plogoff has spoken of nothing but the powerplant. "We drink nuclear at every meal," grumbled a 60-year old man, a pillar of the committee. "What is more," Therese added, "I no longer prepare meals for my men. There is too much to do!" The women have set up an anti-invader committee. But they have turned their backs on violence. "Not me! I will have my rifle," one seaman shouts before adding: "We are in total war. We will do what the Corsicans did." Bluff? A pretty young woman silently observes the old seamen, with their caps on their heads, who mutter warlike imprecations. With her craftsman husband, 5 years ago she had a house built in Plogoff to live peacefully. She trembles. Opposite her windows one day perhaps there will be the wire fences of the powerplant.

On the site coveted by the EDF (90 hectares of land between Feunteun Aod and Porz Lobous, on a point in the sea) there is a sheep pen. Built last summer, it will have its first sheep and shepherd this Sunday. The EDF has yet to buy any land, and some owners have elected to establish an agricultural land group to rework the land which has been abandoned to the gorse.

However, these are plans for tomorrow. Today, Plogoff is mobilizing to stop the EDF machine; did not candidate Giscard d'Estaing in 1974 promise that nuclear powerplants would not be imposed upon the people?

The people of this area feel that all of the notables have "abandoned" them. Shut up on their peninsula, they intend to fight. And Jean-Marie Kerloch, a roly-poly man, shakes his flabby chin and says gravely: "We have always refused. I would like for the public authorities to be reasonable and leave Plogoff alone. I do not want any deaths in town." Stubborn? In Plogoff, the atom still has not conquered the West.

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13

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ITALY

RADIATION HAZARDS POSED BY U.S. NUCLEAR BASE IN LA MADDALENA

Milan CORRIERE DELLA SERA in Italian 31 Jan 80 p 23

[Article by Gino Zasso: "Controversy in La Maddalena on Escape of Radiation from U.S. Nuclear Submarines Redkindled"]

[Text] La Maddalena (Sassari)--The GILMORE, the tender for U.S. Navy nuclear-powered submarines on station in the Mediterranean, has been moored at Santo Stefano wharf in the Maddalena Archipelago since 1972, and since then a controversy has been raging, sometimes subdued and sometimes violent.

There have been sometimes heated discussions on American occupancy of the island as a possible danger to the populace of northern Sardinia from leaks of radiation from the ship or from the submarines that periodically moor there to complete operations that are always carried out in secrecy--a "top secret" classification is standard in these cases. Periodically, and almost predictably, the controversy has become more violent in conjunction with special events such as when the Environmental Group reported an increase in the amount of radioactivity in the waters of the archipelago, when a nuclear submarine ran aground while steaming submerged off Cagliari, when some CNEN [National Nuclear Energy Commission] personnel identified Costa Smeralda as the possible epicenter of possible leaks of cobalt 60, or when some children were born with skull malformations.

The one lighting the powder this time is a town councillor from La Maddalena, belonging to a party called the MSI [Italian Social Movement], which in this context cannot be suspected of distorting certain facts for political purposes. Indeed, in a letter addressed to the mayor, MSI member Bardanzellu writes, verbatim, "At the U.S. base of Santo Stefano, and not just at Santo Stefano, the radioactivity control apparatus warning lights have been illuminated more than once." The writer, who claims he does not want to create an alarm, reveals how "the disks of personnel of a foreign firm that furnishes electric power have not been replaced. Those disks reveal radioactivity in the area, and the same personnel have heard reports about the examinations of the old disks sent long ago to the laboratories assigned to analyze them."

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According to rumors heard in Italian Navy circles, the warning lights of the monitoring systems actually did light up, but the phenomenon was attributed to a drop in voltage in the electric line. However, if this is true, the fact would still be serious in that it shows how the systems for warning of excessive radioactivity are not sufficiently reliable.

In any case, upon receiving the letter from the town councillor, the mayor of La Maddalena immediately requested clarifications regarding the matter from the naval headquarters in Sardinia, the military authority having jurisdiction.

In the meantime the presence of American military personnel on Maddalena island seems destined to increase; in the early spring the GILMORE will return to the United States to make way for another nuclear submarine tender, the ORION, of heavier tonnage. With that ship, new contingents of marines will arrive on the island.

In order to house their families while awaiting the completion of the construction of the "American village" in the northern part of La Maddalena (the work authorization was issued by the Office of Ancient Monuments and Buildings of Sassari on condition that the firm that is to build around 200 living quarters restore the typical Mediterranean flora already partially despoiled in the area), the U.S. command has already leased 700 bedrooms in a huge hotel complex in the vicinity of Santa Teresa di Gallura.

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ITALY

INTERVIEW WITH IPPOLITO ON NUCLEAR ENERGY PROBLEM

Milan L'EUROPEO in Italian 31 Jan 80 pp 26-27

[Interview with Prof Felice Ippolito, former CNEN chairman, by Salvatore Rea: "If the Light Goes Out, Call Giscard"; date and place not given]

[Text] The long "drawing-room polemics," as Minister Andreatta has termed them, against the construction of nuclear power plants have already achieved a concrete result. "Within a very few years," says Prof Felice Ippolito, former chairman of the CNEN [National Nuclear Energy Commission] and member of the European Parliament, "in order to keep our industry going we shall be forced to purchase electrical power from France, which has recently inaugurated 5 new nuclear power plants and is scheduled to build 32 others. Fortunately, the government has finally approved the ENEL [National Electric Power Agency] plan, which calls for the construction of a few power plants."

[Question] However, the regions have reserved the right to approve the location of the nuclear power plants. And with this reservation, Professor, do you not think we shall remain a long time at the same point we were 10 years ago?

[Answer] No, I believe we have made some progress. The regions stated that they had not had any way to examine the "site map" prepared by ENEL. However, they advised that they have nothing against ENEL's initiating those site studies immediately. This will enable us to gain a little time while awaiting an answer from the regions.

[Question] How much time is required to build a nuclear power plant?

[Answer] Including the site study, about 10 years. The Caorso plant took a little longer.

[Question] Then we are seriously behind with respect to our needs?

[Answer] Certainly; our delay is very serious. Aside from the plant located in Montalto di Castro, which might start up before 1990, the power plants now under discussion will not be operational before 1990 or 1992. Worse yet: the

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nuclear power plant program is carried out step by step, because the nuclear industry is not capable of building them all simultaneously. For example, two power plants are to be set up in 1980, two others in 1981, and so on.

[Question] And thus, to have about 20 power plants in operation we shall have to wait until the year 2000?

[Answer] Exactly; provided we succeed in beginning this year.

[Question] Meanwhile, where shall we get the power necessary to avoid a paralysis in our industrial production and a subsequent massive drop in employment?

[Answer] In the interim period we must carry out a very serious energy-saving policy not enforced by decree laws alone, although these may be necessary. However, it takes time to put such a policy into effect. Therefore, we shall be faced with an extremely dismal period from an energy standpoint. Methane from Algeria will arrive in Italy between 1981 and 1982 and with this it will be possible to achieve a buffer program. That is, it would be possible to build turbogas power plants using methane while awaiting the start-up of our first nuclear power plants in 1990 and 1992. At that time the turbogas plants would be put in reserve and the methane diverted to other activities. In this way we would partially compensate for our lack of electrical power.

[Question] You say "partially." And when shall we get the rest?

[Answer] We shall purchase the rest from France. However, it is incredibly absurd to purchase electrical power from French nuclear power plants instead of building our own. This is where polemics and indecision have brought us. In 1990 we shall have to purchase 30 percent of our electrical energy needs from France; we shall be able to obtain another 30 percent by using Algerian methane in turbogas power plants. In practice, we shall be at the mercy of countries which, as friendly as they may be, could grab us by the throat at a particular moment.

[Question] How safe are the nuclear power plants we shall eventually build?

[Answer] The conclusive report recently given Minister of Industry Bisaglia by the committee of experts he had appointed and of which I am a member, asserts that safety standards adopted by Italy are certainly among the best in the world and, in some instances, superior to those of the United States. Naturally, we have taken into consideration the high risk of nuclear power plant activity; but we have also stressed that this is the only high-risk activity in Italy subject to control. All other high-risk activities, from hydroelectric power plants (let us recall the Vajont) to the chemical industry, to the steel industry, to coal-fired electric power plants (does no one think about those who have died in the mining industry?), are not subject to any control. Does not radioactivity from coal-fired power plants worry our ecologists? In nuclear power plants there must be a serious accident to

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cause radiation to escape, but this did not happen even at the Three Mile Island plant in the United States. On the other hand, coal sends a high percentage of radioactivity into the atmosphere. Criticisms are all directed toward nuclear energy because, through gross ignorance, it is considered that a nuclear power plant is like an atomic bomb. This is colossal nonsense.

[Question] Will the conference to be held in Venice on 25 February clear the air on this point?

[Answer] I am sure of it. However, the speeches at the Venice conference should be limited to the experts. In Venice we should discuss only the degree of safety achieved by nuclear power plants and not ENEL's energy plan. Therefore, I hope certain panels and comrades will not be permitted to take part in the conference. We have no time to lose; we are already at the scheduled blackouts. If we lose more time, we shall arrive at almost a total blackout. Which also means general unemployment.

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